



MT. CULMEN CLARION

A Newsletter of Mt. Culmen EC Church

*"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light;
and what you hear whispered, shout from the rooftops!"*

Volume 6 - Issue 9 - September 2023

Pastor

Rev. Jonathan J. Brown
717-205-6532

Lay Delegate

Rebekah Brown

Alternate Lay Delegate

Kenneth Bannon

Board President

Floyd Mast

Board Vice President

Delrea Ream

Board Secretary

Sharon Mast

Church Treasurer

Esther Stauffer

Trustees:

Floyd Mast
Barry Ream
David Rissler
Ian Pammer

Stewards:

Esther Stauffer
Joyce Garber
Kim Sweigart
Brenna Pammer

Members-at-Large:

Sharon Mast
Delrea Ream



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Risking It All for Love

— Rev. Jonathan Brown

In our ongoing study together of the Book of Numbers, last month we heard the horror show that was Korah's rebellion, an attempt to wrestle priestly privileges away from the family of Aaron in the name of a "priesthood of all believers." In the coming months, as we unwrap what we read in chapters 17 and 18, we're going to continue to confront those same themes of authority, hierarchy, priesthood, and sacrifice, because they loom large. Just like it took several chapters to clean up the fallout of the rebellion that lost a generation their promised land, so the issues raised by Korah will take a while to settle.

But this month, we have to tie up the sixteenth chapter, which not only contains the tale of Korah and his allies, but it tells us what happened the day *after* judgment fell on their tents. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram have been swallowed up by the earth; the 250 chiefs (Levites?) who joined them in rebellion have been claimed by fire out of the tabernacle. And yet now, *"on the next day, all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying: 'You have killed the people of the LORD!'"* (Numbers 16:41). Earlier, Moses had defended this same congregation from getting lumped in with Korah (16:22). Now, the congregation celebrates the late Korah & Co.!

Isn't that rather stunning? Imagine that you're an Israelite. You followed Moses out of Egypt, you were at Mt. Sinai, you've witnessed God's organization of Israel, you've seen what happened when Korah voluntarily put his ideas to the test and paid the price... and after all that, can you really think that Korah was the hero and that Moses and Aaron had trapped him in a villainous plot? But that's now the popular Israelite opinion: that Moses and Aaron, through some trickery, had managed to magically destroy God's 'real' people with earth and fire, and that Moses and Aaron are therefore the LORD's enemies.

And so *"the congregation assembled against Moses and against Aaron"* (16:42). This is no peaceful assembly. This has all the makings of a lynch mob. They're scapegoating Moses and Aaron as murderers of God's people... all so that Israel can act out what they accuse, because here Israel itself is trying to murder God's most loyal people! Making Moses and Aaron out to be persecutors, they justify themselves in persecuting them.

So when persecution falls on them, what do Moses and Aaron do? *"They turned toward the Tent of Meeting."* They look to God for help. They don't fix their eyes on the perils before them, but look beyond the mob to the God who's an ever-present help. And then, no sooner have they looked, *"behold! the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared"* (16:42). God in his majesty appears on the scene!

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Mount Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church

1885 Turkey Hill Road, East Earl, PA 17519

Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00 AM

Board Meeting Notes (August 2023)

Last month, the Official Board of Mt. Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church convened its meeting after the worship service and special congregational meeting on Sunday, August 6, 2023, so as to conduct the regular business of the church. In attendance at the meeting were 11 out of the 13 members of our church board: Del Ream, Barry Ream, Kim Sweigart, Dave Rissler, Joyce Garber, Ian Pammer, Brenna Pammer, Ken Bannon, Rev. Jonathan Brown, Rebekah Brown, and Esther Stauffer.

Opening with prayer and roll call, the board heard the customary reports.

Of these, the treasurer's report submitted *in absentia* by Esther Stauffer noted:

- July 2023 income of \$6,371.25
- July 2023 expenses of \$5,015.31
- a July 31 ending balance of \$12,563.93

The secretary's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Kim Sweigart, seconded by Dave Rissler.

The treasurer's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Rebekah Brown, seconded by Kim Sweigart.

The stewards had no report to give at this time.

The trustees had several items to report. First, weed spray had been applied to the outside perimeter of the church building. Second, Ian Pammer reported that the trustees were focusing on the stained-glass-window project, and that Carol Moore of Moore Custom Art Glass would be here on the morning of Tuesday, August 8, to put the second window back in and to extract the third one along the back wall. Third, it was reported that the light panels had been installed in the fellowship hall, thus completing that phase of the trustees' work.

Under the heading of old business, the board began with a consideration of the then-upcoming church picnic. Since Esther Stauffer and Dave Rissler already planned to be present on August 8 to assist with the stained glass windows, they reported that they would set up a sign at the corner of Church Center Road and Route 625; further, another sign would be procured for out in front of the church building itself, to catch the attention of traffic on Turkey Hill Road.

The greatest amount of time was occupied with a review by Esther Stauffer of our food price list from the prior year, in conjunction with information provided by Joyce Garber about prices from the recent Terre Hill Days event in July 2023. Through this discussion, the board opted to keep most of our prices the same (e.g., hot dog [\$2], hamburger [\$3], cheeseburger [\$3.50], slices of pie or cake [\$2], bowls of soup [\$3], and dips of ice cream [\$2]). However, it was decided to increase the price of a quart of soup from \$7 to \$8, and also to add the sale of potato chips for \$1/bag.

Further discussion of preparation for the picnic included Esther's report on having requested 25 pounds of meat, not our prior year's 20 pounds, from Weaver Market; a decision not to worry about following up on the possibility of reintroducing barbecue chicken as a food item (for which we would have likely had to hire Riehl's); and a reminder to keep the ice cream and water table staffed throughout the auction time. Esther confirmed also that there are plenty of soup containers available; that she would check on whether we have sufficient tickets; and that generous members of the church had stepped forward to provide baked goods. Further, she would secure volunteers to cook the chicken for the soup, and she would be present on Friday, August 18, from 5:00pm, to receive donated items. On the matter of the concert, Esther reported that she had confirmed with the band, Mountain Gospel Harmony Ministries, the timing of their two sets from 1:00pm to 2:00pm and from 3:00pm to 4:00pm.

Finally, on the matter of the auction, Rebekah Brown reported and displayed several donations provided by local companies of distinguished generosity: a \$25 gift card from Shady Maple, a \$30 gift card from Yoder's, and from JB Zimmerman, 2 Yeti tumblers, each of which comes with a \$25 gift card. As for donations from within the church, Esther mentioned her usual provision of two catered meals, and Dave said he had some things to give (and requested donations of company T-shirts and hats), but overall a concern was expressed over the scarcity of big-ticket items.

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Continuing the auction discussion, the board agreed not to try to repeat the silent auction component from last year. After review, it was decided that several mistakes had been made, such as not announcing the impending close of bidding, and formats for the sheets to sign that got people confused and had them bidding on items they didn't intend to bid on, and not on the ones they intended to bid on. Therefore, there would be no silent auction this year.

Also on the subject of old business, taking up previous discussions about our lawn care service, Del Ream offered some impassioned thoughts on how "the Lord's house should look beautiful," and that more care needed to be given especially to the grass directly around the church building; however, the trustees and other volunteers personally do what they can, but there's only so much. Esther Stauffer reported that there had been some communication issues with our current provider, TruGreen, in which they billed for servicing the church on two consecutive months, and it seemed as though they had gotten our account confused: "Something seems to be a little off."

Several other board members reported on their own past experiences with TruGreen in personal use, and the reasons why they had discontinued their arrangements with TruGreen. Esther Stauffer expressed concern over the matter.

Rebekah Brown encouraged the board to investigate a change of services and finding one that offers an affordable weeding service. After further discussion, Esther proposed to gather more information on other grounds service programs. Del Ream made a motion to that effect, which was seconded by Rebekah Brown and passed unanimously.

Further under old business, Ken Bannon inquired about an update from the needlework group that had requested monthly or every-other-monthly use of our fellowship hall. Pastor Jonathan replied that he had checked with Abby Eberly and that the group would be meeting the afternoon following the board meeting to begin their discussion on their end, and would get back to us as soon as their decision was reached. (*N.B. – The needlework group ultimately decided to go exclusively with a Lebanon County location and not to meet in the Mt. Culmen fellowship hall.*)

Under the heading of new business, Pastor Jonathan had several items. First, he informed the board officially about the upcoming vacation he had planned – that he would be off from August 22 through August 29 as he and Rebekah spent a week in Washington DC, and that he had arranged already for Barry Heckman to substitute for him as guest preacher during the August 27 Sunday worship service. Second, he introduced this year's Christmas cantata, *The First Noel*, which has been performed at Mt. Culmen in a previous year. Sign-ups for the cantata choir are ongoing presently, an informational meeting for choir volunteers will be held on Thursday, September 7, for them to listen to the cantata and receive books and CDs, and weekly rehearsals will take place on Thursdays beginning October 12.

Third, Pastor Jonathan introduced a proposal for an autumn yard sale / soup sale event for Saturday, October 7, with the yard sale component to be organized by Cindy Ruth. A discussion followed about the feasibility of making soups again, and Del suggested we seek donations of soup ingredients to help defray expenses for our cooks. A motion to approve the event was made by Barry Ream, seconded by Ken Bannon, and passed unanimously.

Finally, Esther Stauffer described how the church – like many local residents – has been impacted recently by the challenges in providing service faced by local refuse companies. Trash was not picked up at all in the week prior to the board meeting, and we had two very full large garbage bins that the board was anxious to have taken away before the then-upcoming church picnic. On the other hand, the refuse-hauling company had so far been honoring prior custom of not charging the church for trash pick-up – and, as Joyce Garber pointed out, one can't complain too much about free service! The Reams recommended that Esther simply leave the bins out for the following week, and they were certain that everything would be taken.

There being no further business after that, on motion of Esther Stauffer, as seconded by Dave Rissler, the board adjourned its meeting, to reconvene following the worship service on **Sunday, September 10, 2023.**

Turkey Hill Community Picnic, Concert, and Auction

Thanks to everyone who helped with making this year's community picnic, concert, and auction event,
held on Saturday, August 19, 2023,
such a success and a good time!

We couldn't possibly have had better weather,
and we'd love to share some pictures from our event
on this and the next three pages.



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We want to especially thank Mountain Gospel Harmony Ministries for their hour-long sets of wonderful music at 1:00pm and 3:00pm performed on our pavilion stage to the pleasure and delight of our listening ears.



Under the pavilion roof and the clearest of skies, Mountain Gospel Harmony Ministries sounded grand!

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A great part of that success was due to our auction, and we had some excellent items to bid on, especially thanks to donations from JB Zimmerman, Horst's Farm Market, Shady Maple, Yoder's, Ranck's Family Restaurant, Riehl's Bar-B-Que, Eby's General Store, Charles Shirk Trucking, Esther Stauffer, Dave Rissler, other church members, and more.



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We want to thank Bob Rissler for once again serving as our auctioneer, with the assistance of Dave Rissler, Ken Bannon, Kim Sweigart, and Lorelai Schulze!



Among this year's higher-selling items, a baked ham dinner for eight sold for \$350, a shrimp dinner for ten sold for \$300, a roast beef dinner for eight sold for \$240, a set of six handcarved wooden letter-openers sold for \$90 (\$15/each), a handcarved train-themed cane sold for \$80, an antique egg scale sold for \$45, a \$30 gift card to Horst Farm Market sold for \$39, a three-quart batch of chili by Eli Newswanger sold for \$39 (\$13/quart), two Yeti-brand tumblers with \$25 Ace Hardware gift cards attached sold respectively for \$39 and \$36, an Eagles championship ring sold for \$31, and a cast-iron lighthouse sold for \$30.

When all was said and done, between profits from food sales, soup sales, baked good sales, and the auction, we raised \$4,473.99 toward this year's project, which will be the HVAC work our fellowship hall needs!

Upcoming Church Events

- **Mt. Culmen Fall Yard Sale / Soup Sale** – On Saturday, **October 7**, 2023, from 8:00am until 1:00pm, our church will host another yard sale and soup sale! Not only will we be making and selling soups to take home (\$4/pint or \$8/quart), we'll also have ham-and-cheese sandwiches, hot dogs, chips, and baked goods. For the yard sale, spaces are \$5/each; bring your own table, or rent one for an extra \$5 (included in fellowship hall price of \$10/space). Our contact person is Cindy Ruth at (717) 368-9078. Reserve your space now!

Upcoming Community Events

- **Blue Ball Days** – On Friday, **September 1**, 2023, Garden Spot Fire and Rescue will be hosting Blue Ball Days at Station 3 (4305 Division Highway, East Earl), with a car cruise starting at 6:00pm, music and food throughout the night, and a fireworks display at 9:00pm.
- **Chicken Barbecue** – On Saturday, **September 2**, 2023, Pennsylvania Canine Search and Rescue will hold their chicken barbecue fundraiser at Horst Farm Market (640 Reading Road, East Earl) starting at 9:00am. Dinners include chicken legs and halves, baked potato, roll and butter, applesauce, coleslaw, and a drink.
- **Fiddlers Picnic** – On Labor Day, Monday, **September 4**, 2023, the annual Fiddlers Picnic will take place at New Holland Community Park (400 East Jackson Street, New Holland) from 9:00am through 6:00pm.
- **Hay Creek Festival** – From Friday, **September 8**, through Sunday, **September 10**, 2023, the historic Joanna Furnace Complex in Morgantown will have their annual heritage festival, full of demonstrations of traditional crafts, a wide variety of musical performances at the Town Square Stage, and plenty of food and fresh-pressed apple cider! The festival runs 10:00am to 5:00pm daily, with admission costing \$10.
- **Benefit Auction and Barbecue** – On Saturday, **September 9**, 2023, Fairmount Homes will hold their thirty-fourth benefit auction and barbecue event at New Covenant Mennonite Church (529 East Farmersville Road, New Holland). Starting at 6:30am with a country breakfast and flea market, and a performance at 8:30am by the Groffdale Men's Quartet, the auction will begin at 9:00am, with chicken barbecue meals beginning at 10:00am – not to mention french fries made on site, fry pies, fresh-squeezed lemonade, ice cream, and more!
- **International Celebration** – Also on Saturday, **September 9**, 2023, at New Holland Mennonite Church (18 Western Avenue, New Holland), from 11:00am to 2:00pm, there will be an International Celebration with dance, musical performances, food from around the world, and crafts. Tickets – reserve by calling 354-4440 – are \$35/each, or \$60/two, but all proceeds will benefit New Holland Early Learning Center.
- **Reframing Aging** – On Monday, **September 11**, 2023, from 10:00am to 2:00pm at Yoder's Banquet Facility (14 South Tower Road, New Holland), church leader and educator Ervin Stutzman will speak and facilitate small-group discussion on “Reframing Aging: A Dialogue about Living with Purpose and Passion in Every Season.” There is a \$10 cost for lunch.
- **Free Speech and False Speech** – On Wednesday, **September 13**, 2023, from 7:00pm to 8:00pm in the board room of Eastern Lancaster County Library (11 Chestnut Drive, New Holland), Dr. Robert Spicer, Millersville University, will discuss his book *Free Speech and False Speech: Political Deception and Its Legal Limits (or Lack Thereof)*, followed by time for Q&A and light refreshments.
- **Steak and Lobster Dinner** – On Saturday, **September 16**, 2023, Garden Spot Fire and Rescue will host a steak-and-lobster dinner at Station 1 (339 East Main Street, New Holland) from noon until 5:00pm. Tickets (\$30/each) must be purchased in advance, by September 8. Meals include a one-pound lobster, an eight-ounce steak, a baked potato, corn on the cob, applesauce, coleslaw, a dinner roll, and a drink.
- **Poole Forge Day** – Also Saturday, **September 16**, 2023, Historic Poole Forge (1940 Main Street, Narvon) will host their big annual festival from 9:00am to 5:00pm, with food vendors, arts and crafts, live music, hay rides, goat races, a pet parade, a silent auction, and so much more! Plus, admission to this one is... free!
- **Benefit Auction** – On Thursday, **September 21**, 2023, at the Terre Hill Community Park (210 Lancaster Avenue, Terre Hill), food will be available starting at 5:00pm; and then, at 6:00pm, an auction will begin, featuring furniture, handmade crafts, shrubbery, gift certificates, groceries, household goods, and more.
- **Community Meal** – On Monday, **September 25**, 2023, from 5:30pm to 6:30pm, CrossNet Ministries will provide a free community meal at their youth center (110 West Franklin Street, New Holland).
- **Ephrata Fair** – That's right, fair season is upon us! The Ephrata Fair will run from Tuesday, **September 26**, through Saturday, **September 30**, 2023.

In Memoriam: Ray W. Snader

A dear brother in Christ and fellow member of our Mt. Culmen family, Ray Snader, passed into the arms of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Monday, July 17, 2023. He leaves behind his wife Delores, his son Bob and his wife Ruth, his daughter Doris, his son Jeff and his wife Esther, his daughter Julia, his son John and his wife Patricia, his six grandsons, his sixteen great-grandchildren, his sisters Fay and Kathryn, his brother Kenneth, countless nieces and nephews, and a church family who will also miss him greatly.

Ray, on his father Aaron Zimmerman Snader's side, was a descendant of the Schneider/Schnader/Snader family which immigrated from near the Swiss-German border in the 1700s. And although Ray only came to Mt. Culmen in his later years, he had a family connection there: his great-grandfather Samuel's sister Christianna married into a Mt. Culmen family, and so Ray's grandfather Aaron Rutt Snader (1864-1947) was a first-cousin of longtime Mt. Culmen organist and Sunday School teacher Ella Mae Seiverling.



Much of the Snader family of that era, however, was Mennonite. So, too, was Ray's mother's family, the Wises; in fact, Ray's mother Kathryn 'Katie' Weaver Wise's maternal grandfather was Rev. Jacob B. Weaver (1844-1915), pastor of Weaverland Mennonite Church. However, the Snaders and the Wises did not see eye-to-eye on one of the more prominent disputes in the Mennonite world of the 1920s – namely, the permissibility of the automobile, still a technology only recently available. Though it would be several years before the Weaverland Mennonite Conference would be ripped apart by the question, still, when young Aaron Z. Snader was courting Katie Wise, Aaron would have to park his car down the road and walk the rest of the way to visit Katie at home, since Katie's parents Elam and Anna – horse-and-buggy Mennonites – refused to allow Aaron's automobile onto their property.

On Saturday, November 22, 1924, Aaron, age 20, and Katie, age 18, were married at Goodville by Bishop Benjamin Weaver. Not quite seven months later, their first son Lloyd was born in June 1925. Lloyd was followed by Ruth in August 1926, Aaron Jr. in April 1928, Vera Mae in January 1930, and Anna in September 1931. Sometime around December 1933 or January 1934, Katie became pregnant yet again. Eventually, she formed a suspicion that more was going on than in previous pregnancies, but her doctor assured her that she was mistaken. On the morning of Monday, September 17, 1934, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Only then, as the story goes, did the doctor exclaim in surprise that she wasn't done, that “there's another one in there” – Katie had been pregnant with twins! And, fifteen minutes or so after the birth of the first, Katie brought forth the other twin: this time, a boy.



Above: Ray and his sister Fay as infants.

Right: Ray between his twin sister Fay and their little brother Melvin, in July 1938.

With their other children, Aaron and Katie had largely followed the normal practice among Mennonite families of using the mother's maiden name – 'Wise,' in this case – as a middle name for all the children. But in the case of these twins, Aaron and Katie broke from tradition, giving them rhyming middle names and distinctive first names. The twin girl, they named Amanda Fay Snader; the twin boy, they named Elam Ray Snader. (Ray didn't care for the name 'Elam,' though he bore it after his grandfather; so he changed his name to just 'Ray Wise Snader.')

Although he was Fay's twin, Ray set himself apart as a much more rambunctious and outdoorsy child.



Ray was thus the seventh of the Snader children, with two older brothers and four older sisters. He was soon joined by a few more siblings: a little brother Melvin in May 1936 (when Ray was one), a little sister Kathryn in October 1942 (when Ray was eight), and a little brother Kenneth in September 1944 (when Ray had just turned ten).

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By this point, the Second World War was raging far away, but after the war, in July 1947, Katie did give birth to one last child – a stillborn son, the little brother whose company Ray never got to enjoy. Still, Ray enjoyed his winters – he and Melvin enjoyed ice skating on the surface of the Conestoga Creek, provided it had been cold enough for long enough to be safe. (Ray perhaps enjoyed less the winter he got sprayed by a skunk and had to wash in the family's tub outdoors!) And in yet another childhood misadventure, one Sunday Ray and Melvin amused themselves in throwing ears of corn at each other; Melvin hit Ray in the mouth with one, requiring a partial dental plate.

During these years, Ray attended the one-room Linden Grove school, from first grade through eighth grade. It was a small school, fewer than fifty students at times (several of whom must've been Snaders), and sometimes struggled to find teachers. Ray's teachers included Catherine Tyson, Norman Stover, Rachel Kuhn, Arlene Wenger, and Mildred Myers; while toward the end of his time there, the school came in for public criticism for its polluted water supply.

It was while Ray was still a schoolboy that some of his siblings began to get married, starting with the eldest of the bunch, Lloyd, who in September 1945 married Irene Hess, Ray's first sister-in-law. (Four years later, Irene would gain a little brother named Leon Hess, whose never-dull friendship we've all come to know.) The next year, Ray gained himself his first brother-in-law when Ray's sister Ruth married Howard Weber. However, in the waning hours of Christmas 1947, 13-year-old Ray lost his grandfather, Aaron Rutt Snader.

As soon as Ray finished the eighth grade, per family tradition he was withdrawn from school and put to work. His big sister Vera had married a farmer named Ivan Zimmerman on Thanksgiving Day 1948, and Ivan – who worked as a tobacco packer – hired Ray to do his hoeing. Ray resented being hired out as a minor, comparing it to a form of slavery. And it's little wonder he felt that way. In late March 1950, the census-taker caught Ray as a fifteen-year-old living at his brother-in-law Ivan's house. Free to use his preferred name ('Ray'), he was able to testify that the preceding year (1949, when he was just 14), he worked all fifty-two weeks in the year, without a break – and yet earned an annual salary of merely \$400 (barely over \$5,000 per year in today's money). And in the week of March 1950 before the census-taker arrived, he reported having worked 72 hours – twenty more hours than Ivan did, and twenty-four more hours than his own dad Aaron worked. Two weeks later, when the census-taker visited his parents' house in mid-April 1950, they claimed that their son "Elam R. Snader" was not only still living there with them, but was still going to school – directly contradicting what Ray and the Zimmermans had already testified.

Ray also was hired out to other relatives for farm work, to Ivan Martin's stone quarry, and to New Holland Concrete. But that's not to say that Ray's life during this period was pure drudgery. In August 1951, his uncle Henry Wise took 16-year-old Ray along on a family fishing trip to Bowers Beach in Delaware, where they caught hundreds of porgies. It would be one episode of many in Ray's adventurous future life of fishing and hunting. That year, after turning 17, Ray secured himself a job at Victor F. Weaver, Inc., based out of New Holland – a company that would give him nearly half a century of employment stability. (In October that year, however, Ray's grandma Amanda Snader died.)



Then one day, Ray happened to be at the Pagoda on Mount Penn north of Reading, and there Ray met a girl named Delores Elaine Hahn. The daughter of Frank and Cleta Hahn, Delores was three years Ray's junior, and still enrolled as a student at Terre Hill High School. The pair of them, united in their personalities by a tenacious resolve, began to see each other (*see picture to left of Ray and Delores in 1954, next to Ray's 1953 Chevy*). And after Delores had graduated high school, then on Saturday, July 2, 1955, at 3:00pm, in the parsonage of Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church in Terre Hill, Rev. Daniel A. Draper pronounced 20-year-old Ray and 17-year-old Delores man and wife (*see right*).



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Ray and Delores, as young newlyweds, settled in Terre Hill, renting an apartment from the Wagners at 401 Main Street for \$45/month – high for the time, but about 10% of their income. Ray was continuing to work for Victor F. Weaver, while Delores worked for the Terre Hill Manufacturing Company at their lingerie factory in Blue Ball, first as a machine operator but later as a typist in their shipping department. It was while the couple were living there in their Main Street apartment that Delores became pregnant. As the time for her to give birth drew nearer, the Snaders decided to move again, in April 1956, to Goodville, to an apartment owned by Elva Kreider, who charged them only \$28/month. In that apartment, Ray and Delores' first child was born: Robert Ray Snader, 'Bob,' in late June 1956. He wasn't quite a year old when his parents took him on a June 1957 trip to Chesapeake City with Delores' parents.

In November 1957, Ray and Delores decided that, with one child and another soon on the way, it was time for another move. They returned to Terre Hill, closer to Delores' parents, and rented a half-house at 427 Maple Street for \$30/month – a place with a few rooms, an attic, a cellar, and an outhouse. Two months after moving there, Ray and Delores welcomed their first daughter, Doris Jean Snader, in January 1958. Twenty months later, they had a third child: Jeffrey Lynn Snader, in September 1959, twenty-five days after the death of Jeffrey's grandmother, Ray's mother-in-law Clela Hagar (Diehm) Hahn. During these years, Ray and Delores often hosted various relatives for family dinners, much as, even before their marriage, Ray and Delores had frequent seats at Aaron and Katie's table.

In October 1960, they were joined by a fourth child, another daughter, Julia Ann Snader. With four children, the house on Maple Street was growing a bit tight once more, and so when it came to light that Ray's parents intended to move to Terre Hill, Ray bought his own childhood home in East Earl, at 427 Linden Road, wherein he'd been born. It cost their whole savings of \$3,800, plus another \$1,200 they had to borrow from Aaron, and they borrowed still more money from the bank in order to deepen the well and hire Frank Hahn's friend Louie Brendle to install plumbing and convert one of the house's four bedrooms into their very first indoor bathroom. During preparations of the house and its garden, Ray would often harvest before leaving for his night's work, and then, after coming home to Terre Hill, would attempt to sleep in their Maple Street house while Delores went to paint and wallpaper the Linden Road property. "Of course," Delores later recalled, "the kids would wake from their naps and waken Ray, and when I went home, I would meet grouchy kids and sleepless Ray."

The Snaders moved in to the old Snader family house on Friday, February 23, 1962. Perhaps not long thereafter, as Bob recalled being about six years old, a traveling circus had been passing nearby when the elephant truck broke down, and so the Snaders had the opportunity to witness a circus elephant being tasked with pushing its own vehicle down the road. This may have been before the final addition to their family: in May 1963, two months after the death of Ray's grandfather and namesake Elam Groff Wise, his son John Gerald Snader was born. While Ray had been the seventh of ten children in his family, Delores had been the first of four in hers, and decided that five was plenty for theirs. Ray, at 28 years old, was a hard-working homeowner and strict father of five.

Religiously, though, Ray had become detached from active involvement in the Mennonite Church. Delores was not from a rural Mennonite background; she was from town (which carried a different set of expectations about marriage – as Ray and Delores were learning), and she had grown up attending Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church in Terre Hill, of which she'd been a member since April 1950. Not long after they'd gotten married in that church, Ray had joined it himself, in late September 1955, by confession of faith. But while Ray allowed Delores to have their children baptized there and to take them, his own outlook was a disinterested one, as Ray had come to think of religion as a respectable pursuit for those who wanted it, but felt no need for it himself. If Delores and the children went to church, they went without Ray coming along, and in April 1969 his name would be dropped from the rolls.

In the summer of 1964, Ray and Delores drove their new 1964 Dodge to Canada, to a lake-side cabin, for a vacation with all five children, and soon were joined by some family friends. However, after an argument with Ray, Delores loaded all five children into the car and returned to the United States without Ray, knowing he'd find his way home with their friends in time. "When Ray came home with Marty, as we left him there," Delores said, "they had a flat tire and had to unload all the stuff Marty had in the back of the truck." It may be unsurprising, then, that as a general rule, Ray and Delores tended to take the children on wholly separate outings more than family vacations together.

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Although Ray had begun his career at Victor F. Weaver by pulling lungs out of slaughtered birds, he'd become a chicken catcher and then a truck driver – anywhere in a hundred-mile radius (including out to Maryland and Virginia, prior to Weaver starting to operate their own growout houses in 1963), he'd travel to farms and, once the chicken catchers had done their work, bring them to the Weaver plant for processing; otherwise, there'd be no work for anyone else to do. One year, as Ray told it, he was driving truck one December day when he was pulled over by state police; Ray harbored the suspicion they'd been hoping to find some fault with which they could pressure him into giving them a free Christmas bird! On another occasion, Ray recalled a drunk driver plowing his car into Ray's truck at Littletown, Pennsylvania – an incident that was far harder on the drunk's car than on Ray's truck.



Before the 1960s were done, Ray had bought his first boat, a wooden one – he later replaced it with a fiberglass boat – and, as his son later put it, “wherever the fish went, he went.” Particularly was this the case with saltwater fishing in places like the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays – although Ray was exceptionally wary of being caught on the water by a storm, such that the smallest dark cloud would send him and his sons back toward their dock.



No less than fishing (and watching ice hockey and baseball), in these years especially Ray loved hunting, and especially he had a fondness for the opening day of ringneck pheasant season, a Saturday when all the local churches and fire halls would tend to offer pancake breakfasts for the eager hunters. But he hunted also wild turkey, deer, wild game – even bear, when the opportunity presented itself.

By the time he was 37 in the early 1970s, Ray had succeeded in paying off the loans he'd taken out to buy his parents' former residence, and soon they'd put an addition onto it – for Ray had come to be a live poultry crew supervisor, with multiple truckers and their trucks under his management. He'd finished a management development course from Pennsylvania State University in February 1968, which he followed with another course in modern supervisory techniques in May 1971, a safety exam for supervisors in August 1972, and a Victor F. Weaver seminar on professional supervision in March 1974.



A later profile of Ray's job as crew supervisor, written in 1983, noted that his crew began their work around 10:00pm at night, working through the dark hours when chickens are calmer, and over the course of a week that his and the two other poultry crews would typically catch about half a million chickens in a typical five-night workweek. “Our worst enemy is the weather,” Ray would say. By that point, his crew stayed at farms (one per night) within a 50-mile radius of the New Holland plant. His night's work would conclude, generally, prior to the production day beginning at the plant around 6:45am. And Ray said he enjoyed working the hours he did because it afforded him extended weekends for his hunting and fishing excursions – to the point that his crew affectionately nicknamed him “the water-rat.”

In one memorable incident, “we had to take a truck down into Maryland to pick up a load of chickens one night,” but “on the way to the farm, we had to cross over a railroad track. We picked up the chickens and were on our way back when we went up the incline leading to the tracks. The road veered to the left, and the driver couldn't see how sharp the curve was, so he ended up getting the dollies of the trailer stuck in the tracks.” That was around 2:00am. Ray recollected: “I didn't know what to do. The farmer called a railroad station agent, who replied he couldn't do anything and told us to get the trailer off the track.” Ray and the farmer then managed to borrow a small bulldozer from the farmer's neighbor, and the farmer and crew worked to free the rig while Ray walked back and forth near the tracks with an all-too-dim flashlight to warn oncoming trains. “It was pitch dark,” Ray said, “and there were deer rustling in the brush. It was extremely frightening.” But, he added, “I was so relieved the train never got there.”

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In the mid- to late 1970s, two significant turning points impressed themselves on Ray's spiritual life. First, in May 1976, the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church assigned Rev. John A. Dillon to Terre Hill, beginning in July 1976. Rev. Dillon, though 15 years Ray's senior, began to form a bond with Ray over a shared enjoyment of hunting, and thereby he was in a better position to slowly influence Ray spiritually during their trips into the woods together as huntsmen.

Second, at some point during these years (perhaps prior to his friendship with Rev. Dillon), Ray was on a hunting trip in West Virginia with his friend Ben Engle, and one Sunday there, Ben wished to attend a church service at a little country church. Ray at this point still distrusted pastors on principle, and wanted (as one of Ray's children told the story) to make sure Ben didn't sign any contracts or otherwise let the church take advantage of him. Therefore, Ray condescended to join Ben at church. However, the preaching and the worship there were used by the Holy Spirit to bring a genuine renewal of heart and soul to both men.

In 1977 or the first half of 1978, then, Ray resumed attendance at the family's old church, Trinity EC Church in Terre Hill. It was a simple enough matter for the removal of his name from the church rolls to simply be written off as an 'error' earlier, and by the summer of 1978, Ray, age 43, was serving as an usher. He'd be further disciplined over the next eight years at the church and in the woods by one and the same minister of the gospel.

It may be no coincidence, of course, that by this time, Ray had become a grandfather, a new experience that can have a profound impact on one's outlook on the world. His eldest son had married Ruth Dentel in November 1976, and Ray's first grandson Jeremiah (*right*) was born nine months later in August 1977, with the second grandson, Bobby, to follow in March 1980, by which time these grandsons and their parents lived directly across the street, on another part of the old Snader land. Later that year, Ray's second son Jeff married Esther Rissler, with their four sons Matthew, Andrew, Joshua, and Joseph Jeffrey ('J.J.') born starting in 1982. Ray's daughter Julia would likewise marry in 1984 (*see below, left*).



In July 1986, Ray received yet another promotion at work. Having already been a live poultry crew supervisor, he was now made the supervisor of the entire live poultry department, albeit with some reluctance on his part.

During one of his West Virginia hunting trips, Ray learned of land for sale near Mount Storm; and, perhaps with an eye toward eventually retiring there, he and his friend Marty purchased it. (While lovely, it proved less suitable as a residence than he'd hoped.)



Around September 1987, Victor Weaver himself retired, leaving the company for which Ray worked in the hands of Victor's son Dale Weaver, who had joined the company six years after Ray himself had started working there. By that point, Victor had already been in negotiations with a North Carolina-based company, Holly Farms Poultry Industries, Inc., which came to fruition in 1988 when Holly Farms purchased ownership of Victor F. Weaver, Inc. The next year, not long before Victor's death, Holly Farms itself was purchased by Tyson Foods, which rebranded the former Victor F. Weaver plant out of which Ray worked as a Tyson plant. Ray came to appreciate the Stock Purchase Program for employees: "It makes me feel like I belong," he told them.

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During his seven years working for Tyson Foods, Inc., Ray said goodbye to three parents – his father Aaron died in December 1991, his father-in-law Frank died in November 1992, and then his mother Katie followed in April 1993.



In 1996, by the age of 62, Ray was – as he had often hoped – able to take his well-earned retirement, having completed forty-five years of service to his company, as celebrated on his retirement cake.



Now Ray was free to lay aside the night after night of toil, and to focus on his church, his hobbies of hunting and of fishing, and his family. Several years after he retired, and just before the close of the second millennium, Ray for the first time became a great-grandfather, with the birth of his first great-grandson, Lukas James Snader, in the final days of December 1999. Four and a half years would pass before a second great-grandson, Shane, was born in July 2004; but after that, the Snader family's nearly forty-five-year streak of only boys was broken – third time's the charm – by Ray's great-granddaughter Emma, born in September 2005, followed by Desiree the next year. A continual addition of great-grandchildren has continued nearly every year since then.

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Between the births of Lukas and Emma, three of Ray's siblings passed away within a 13-month window: his eldest brother Lloyd died in June 2003, Aaron Jr. died in May 2004, and his sister Vera followed in July 2004, a mere thirteen days after Ray's great-grandson Shane was born.

Also during that time and in the months that came after it, Ray engaged in controversy with the East Earl Township Board of Supervisors in his quest to get the speed limit on Linden Road considerably lowered, as, in light of its several sharp turns and original layout for horse-drawn buggies, he believed it posed a significant safety risk.



Although Ray and Delores had been actively worshipping with Trinity EC Church in Terre Hill, Ray disliked what he at times perceived as 'church politics' at work in the congregation's life. Furthermore, there came a time when the church's leadership, seeing an imminent need for repairs to the roof, wanted to fund the work by taking out a loan. Ray, however, as a stringent fiscal conservative, believed strongly that the church's trustees ought to delay the work until they could raise the funds, and keep the banks out of the matter. Between these factors, Ray decided he would prefer to find a new church to attend. Through the welcoming influence of Rev. Ken Hoffer, he found a home at Mt. Culmen EC Church. Although he received a letter of transfer in August 2005, he was not officially received into Mt. Culmen membership until the fifth Sunday of Lent, March 29, 2009.

Recent years required Ray to say goodbye to more of his siblings. His brother Melvin died in March 2016. Four years later, as the pandemic shut down societal activity for several months in 2020 (including our church services), Ray's two older sisters both died in quick succession. Ruth died on March 17 in her retirement home. When public worship resumed for us outdoors on June 7, Ray was among those in attendance, although it was later found that he had been diagnosed with COVID-19. The following day, June 8, his sister Anna died in her retirement home.

The pandemic years were a challenge for everyone, and Ray was no exception. He was among those steadfastly against the wearing of facial masks, and had initial questions about whether he'd be welcome at church without one, especially after gatherings returned indoors; however, he found that his church family's love for and embrace of him was indeed unconditional.

During these last years, although recurring bouts with COVID-19 certainly did no favors for the pulmonary fibrosis he was already battling, still his philosophy was that "when it's your time, it's your time" – that he didn't fear death, because he believed that nothing could happen that was outside God's will for him, that he'd live for the number of days God had foreordained, neither more nor less.



Over time, though, Ray's health worsened: he continued the slow onset of dementia, he began to require an oxygen tank (which he referred to as his resented "contraption"), he came to rely on a wheelchair – and so he had to give up his driver's license, sell his truck, and move away from his home of sixty years. (His grandson bought Ray's house, to keep it in the Snader family.) Ray's final year was lived with his son Jeff and daughter-in-law Esther, who during the first portion of that time also were caring for Ray's wife Delores, thus bringing them temporarily back under one roof. In this closing year, Ray received care both from Esther herself and from Ruthie Kulp of Anabaptist Care (whom the family lauded as an extremely helpful caregiver). Ray was still able to join us at Mt. Culmen EC Church, thanks to being brought some weeks by his son Bob and daughter-in-law Ruth, other weeks by his son Jeff and daughter-in-law Esther, and yet other weeks by Esther's brother Dave Rissler, also a noted Mt. Culmen member.

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Ray's final Sunday in attendance at Mt. Culmen was June 18. But then, over the course of late June and early July 2023, Ray's health took accelerated its downward turn, with his breathing growing more and more labored, his speech more raspy and indistinct, and his movement more restricted. During these weeks, he received several visits from family, friends, and his pastor, as it became clearer and clearer that his remaining earthly days were limited. On Monday, July 10, Pastor Jonathan visited with him to encourage him in the faith and to help prepare him for the last things. On Friday, July 14, Ray was visited for the final time by his twin sister Fay. The following day, Saturday, July 15, Ray received a concluding visit from Pastor Jonathan and his wife Rebekah. On that occasion, Pastor Jonathan prayed with Ray, carried out a rite of last anointing with blessed oil (see James 5:14-15), and celebrated Holy Communion with the Snader family; although Ray was no longer able to swallow solids, he was able to partake of the cup. In spite of his dementia, it was evident that Ray was fully aware of the gist of what was going on, expressing gratitude to his pastor and saying emphatically he was ready to go and be with Jesus his Savior.

From then on, as those living with Ray testified, he was filled with a great peace. The next day, Sunday, July 16, Ray's wife Delores was brought to visit him, and their daughter Julia also traveled north to see him. That night, however, Ray fell out of bed, lapsing out of consciousness. And so he remained until, early in the afternoon of Monday, July 17, 2023, Ray's earthly life ceased quietly and peacefully, as he surrendered his spirit to the Lord. An hour or so later, his official time of death was recorded at 3:20pm.

On Tuesday, July 25, 2023, after 9:00am, Ray's body was brought to Mt. Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church by a team from the C. Stanley Eckenroth Home for Funerals. There, his children began to gather at 9:30am to join him privately, once Pastor Jonathan arrived to unlock the church. Shortly before 10:00am, a public viewing commenced, in which a large number of family and friends came to pay their respects to Ray and console his family over the course of the next seventy or so minutes, during which time music played gently in the background.

Around 11:15am, Pastor Jonathan took to the pulpit and welcomed, on behalf of the Snader family and on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, the large number of people who remained. He next read a chain of introductory scripture passages from Romans 5:12; Genesis 3:19; John 3:16; Isaiah 53:4a; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Romans 8:34; John 11:25; and Revelation 14:12-13, followed by the following prayer:

God, Father of your faithful, we thank you for your gospel – that even in death, we are not bereft of hope, but have the good news of rest and reward when we die in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant relief and a restful reward to our brother Ray, and endurance and consolation to ourselves. May Christ, who was crucified to kill Death and who now lives indestructibly in your divine power, so intercede for us in our hour of grief, and stoke the flames of faith in our hearts and love in our lives.



Once those gathered had said 'Amen,' Pastor Jonathan delivered a brief eulogy of Ray and, as Ray had wished, led a responsive recitation of Psalm 23 and then the singing of the hymn "How Great Thou Art," with the assistance of a musical recording of it by the *a cappella* group Acapelridge. Thereafter, Pastor Jonathan read excerpts from Francis Thompson's acclaimed poem "The Hound of Heaven," to which he would refer back in his message:

I fled him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled him, down the arches of the years;
I fled him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.

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But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat – and a voice beat
More instant than the feet –
“Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not me.” ...

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years –
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream....
My freshness spent its wavering shower in the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilled down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity...:
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death? ...

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That voice is round me like a bursting sea:
“And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest me!...
All which I took from thee, I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored it for thee at home:
Rise, clasp my hand, and come!”

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of his hand, outstretched caressingly?
“Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest me.”

Pastor Jonathan then led the singing of the first two verses of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (with the assistance of a musical recording of it by Alan Jackson) and the praying of the Lord's Prayer, after which he read a selection of verses from the Book of Jeremiah: Jeremiah 49:39; 31:31a; 29:11-14a; 31:34b; 29:14b; 16:16; and 31:13, followed by singing the first and third verses of the hymn “Blessed Assurance” (with the assistance of a musical recording of it by The Jordanaires). Pastor Jonathan thereafter preached Ray's funeral homily as follows:

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If there's one thing we surely know about our Ray, it was his sense of humor. And if there's another thing we know, it's that he was nothing if not outspoken. But if there's a third thing we know about our Ray, it's the immense pleasure he took in his long-time passtime of hunting. Whether fishing in Maryland or Ontario for bluefish and largemouth bass and pike, or going on land in West Virginia or right here in Pennsylvania for wild turkey and ringneck pheasant, wild deer and more, that was one of Ray's more passionate pursuits while he could. You could've even read about it in the papers, whether of the thirty-inch catfish he snagged in Perryville the month before Julia was born, or the 17.5-pound turkey he shot in Sullivan County a year and a half later, or the black bear he hauled back from New Brunswick in the summer of 1980, or the 19.5-pound turkey he picked up in Possum Hollow a couple years after that. By 2001, he could proudly write that he'd been hunting deer for over half a century. And to know that, you could've just visited his house, where his mounted bear and over fifty sets of antlers were among his prized trophies returned from the thrill and the kill. Ray was an extraordinary, determined, accomplished hunter.

But like the poet whose words we read a little while ago, Ray was also blessedly hunted. For the words of the poem, "I fled him down the nights and down the days," could've been Ray's, too, in much of the first half of his life. For the longest time, Ray's outlook on matters of faith was what one of his kids described to me as, essentially, that of respecting religion from a distance. Like the flavor of wild game to a more sheltered palate, the taste of God wasn't quite for him – and certainly he didn't all that much trust the church (much less pastors), and desired no involvement in her society.

But Ray, like Francis Thompson, found himself blessedly hunted. For didn't the prophet hear God announce that he would "*send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks*" (Jeremiah 16:16)? And so God sent hunters for Ray – thoughts, stirrings, friends, witnesses, circumstances in his life – and, through them all, the Heavenly Hunter, the Hound of Heaven, was on Ray's trail, following Ray "with unhurrying chase."

And then at last, in a little country church, those "shaken mists of time" parted. Ray heard the trumpet sound from those very "hid battlements of eternity." And the footfall of the Heavenly Hunter, who'd been patiently pursuing Ray through "the arches of the years," halted by him and offered him his hand. And whether more by sudden conversion or more by a gradual change, nevertheless one of his kids told me that, looking back, there was something deep and profound dividing the old Ray and the new Ray, the younger man from the man he was to be. Ray discovered that he, an extraordinary hunter, was also game – but heaven's hunt aimed to bring him, not death, but life. "*I will forgive your iniquity,*" cried Heaven's Hunter, "*and I will remember your sin no more!*" (Jeremiah 31:34).

From there, Ray began to allow himself to be that game continually – to let himself be chased happily and willingly across the sacred page by the Holy Spirit in sweet pursuit. He allowed the Spirit increasingly to hunt out his hurts and bitternesses, his vices and his struggles, from the clefts of the rocks within. And Ray invited this Holy Spirit to show him that, in reality, the Hunter from whom he'd been fleeing was the One he had really been hunting for, seeking after, from the very start.

And now, in this latter half of his life, Ray found new ways to apply his hunting skills. Oh, by no means did he lay aside his rifle and the hunt for deer and turkey and all those. But he took up also the rifle of prayer. And he began to hunt his family and his friends with it, to seek their good and their blessing from God, most especially (wherever he saw the need) the good blessing of conversion to a better life, a life in Christ. As for himself, Ray hunted for even more of creation's goodness, even more of life's delight. Above all, as Heaven's Hunter allowed himself to be Ray's Greatest Game, Ray hunted for more and more of Jesus his Savior.

And in that hunt, as in no other hunt, Ray was guaranteed success. Because he had that promise we read through the prophet: "*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart; I will be found by you, declares the LORD*" (Jeremiah 29:13-14).

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It was conceivable Ray could come home from an earthly hunting trip with no catch. But whenever Ray put all his heart into this hunt, whenever Ray camouflaged himself in the garments of holiness, whenever Ray loaded up the ammo of faith and hope and love, whenever Ray made sure to frequent that hunting ground of God called the church, then it was impossible for Ray to go home empty-handed. And patterns of success in his spiritual hunt grew him in grace as a hunter.

So what now? Now this hunting season has come to a close – at least for Ray. Because Ray's body may be here with us, but Ray's soul – like fish brought into his boat – has been at last fully reeled in to another world. And we rest assured there's no better place to be than in the Father's House, where all Ray ever fancied as loss has been stored up for him at home (cf. John 14:2). It is so much better, I promise you, to be brought home to the Father's House than to wind up as the devil's twisted taxidermy – for make no mistake, we're all game for somebody, be it the Lord of Life or that wretched dealer in death; and each of us here, you and me, will be finally caught by one or the other, and receive the liveliest life or the deadliest death accordingly.

Left behind, with the season still open for us, we do grieve our loss here – we're going to miss Ray in ways that might be hard to put into words. We grieve also the unnaturalness of death befalling someone made, as Ray was, in the image and likeness of God – because things aren't supposed to be that way, but then sin came into the world, and now here we have to be. But even in the midst of those griefs, we trust that our darkest gloom is simply shade cast by God's hand "outstretched caressingly" to comfort us. And so the Hunter's call is nothing but the relieving summons to rise and take hold of comfort and of glory.

And so in God do we have hope that, for Ray, this is less of an ending and more of a beginning. All which ever was taken from him, down to and including his final breath – and all which is taken even now from us, even our very dear friend – was and is taken, not for our harms, but simply to make us seek all these goods, all that is or ever could be good, only and eternally and magnificently in Christ's arms. And that right there is where we can, where we should, where we must seek for Ray.

We're left with this promise, that God "*will turn our mourning into joy, and will comfort us, and will give us gladness for sorrow*" (Jeremiah 31:13). For even if our hearts feel like broken fountains, even if our tear-droppings stagnate, even if the pulp of this life at times tastes so very bitter, yet there is sweetness in store, and comfort in the offering, and victory waiting around the corner for all who'll rise and take its hand. So "*behold, now is the favorable time! behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Behold, now is hunting season opening anew! So hunt for comfort. Hunt for consolation. Hunt for peace. Hunt for love. Hunt for blessing. Hunt with all your heart for the One who hunts you, the One who has all these gifts to give, the One to whose house Ray has, we pray, been taken in the great hunt that gives a life that's more lively than all we know as life. Thanks be to God!

During the homily, unexpectedly, a severe thunderstorm had begun to rumble and rain, and precisely as the pastor came to the close of the homily, a loud crash of lightning underscored its closing point – making a deep impression on many of those in attendance, as they afterwards testified. The storm continued to rage while Pastor Jonathan led in the singing of the song "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder," another of Ray's favorites, with the assistance of a musical recording of it by Acapelridge. After praying a prayer of dedication, Pastor Jonathan pronounced a benediction using the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17. In light of the inclement weather (for which few found themselves prepared) and the need for many cars to be brought around to pick up those with special mobility needs, it took a considerable span of time for everyone to exit the church.

By the time those in attendance had driven in procession through the streets to the Terre Hill Cemetery, the rain had stopped – indeed, at the cemetery, there was little evidence of a storm having taken place. But many gathered there, in early afternoon, for a brief graveside committal service. Once the pallbearers had brought the casket containing Ray's body into position, Pastor Jonathan began with a reading from Isaiah 65:15-18a, after which he said:

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You could say that the life of a Christian on the earth is one sustained prayer. And if there's a word we all know by reflex when we pray, it's the word 'amen.' 'Amen' is a Hebrew word; it's got the sense of something being firm, deeply rooted, accepted, trustworthy and true. When we hear the truth and we know it, we say, "Amen!" When we agree with a plan, we say, "Amen!" I say all this because Ray was something of our 'amen corner' at church – one of those rare people who aren't afraid to respond vocally to a point in the sermon that hits home. (As his pastor, I'll certainly miss that!)

When I visited Ray a little less than forty-eight hours before he surrendered his spirit, he was wrapping up the sustained prayer that his life had become. And he was doing it with a whole lot of 'amens' – not just one here, one there, but a string of them pouring out. The eyes of his heart were fixed on a gospel trustworthy and true, on an acceptance of his resting in the Lord's hands, on a desire to depart and be with Christ. To the God he was reminded of, he let loose a crescendo: "Amen, amen, amen, *amen*, **AMEN!**"

And in doing so, he turned himself more and more toward the God of Amen, about whom Isaiah spoke. John tells us that Jesus himself is "*the Amen, the faithful and true witness*" (Revelation 3:14). In him, we've come face-to-face with that God of Amen. And Paul announces Jesus as the Savior in whom "*all the promises of God find their Yes in him,*" which provokes "*our 'Amen!' to God for his glory*" (2 Corinthians 1:19-20).

So here are four of those quick, simple promises. First, "*amen, amen I say to you: an hour is coming... when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live*" (John 5:25)! This place around us, this Terre Hill Cemetery, is no final repository, but only short-term storage, in the Lord's eyes. Second, amen, amen I say to you: the God of Amen has a new creation in the works (Isaiah 65:17)! The sky overhead will be new, the dirt underfoot will be new, all things will be made new and fresh as never before. Third, amen, amen I say to you: all these troubles of sickness and strife, of grief and of graveside, will there be forgotten, be hidden away, not even a distant memory (Isaiah 65:16). And fourth, amen, amen I say to you: Ray's Easter is coming – he can be glad forever when he stands up, body and soul, in that world made new (Isaiah 65:18). And so can I, and so can you, if we say and live our 'Amen!' to the end. That's blessing ourselves for eternity (Isaiah 65:15). So take heart now: the promises are all Yes and Amen!

With the conclusion of this message and a brief time of reflection, Pastor Jonathan turned, made the sign of the cross over Ray's head, and commended Ray's soul to God's merciful care and Ray's body to the ground for safekeeping until the promised resurrection and a new creation. Pastor Jonathan then pronounced Numbers 6:24-26 as a benediction on all of those who had gathered, many of whom eventually gathered at Yoder's Restaurant, where a banquet room had been reserved for the Snader family and other funeral guests for a meal in Ray's memory.

(Continued from Page 1, "Risking It All for Love")

One Christian reader in the third century, Origen of Alexandria, drew attention to this – how it's only after the mob starts threatening Moses and Aaron, and only after they turn toward the tabernacle, that God's glory overshadows it. The bright splendor, the beauty of the LORD, isn't made visible until the darkness is at its deepest. To Origen, this suggests "how great is the benefit that comes during the persecutions of Christians, how much grace is bestowed, how God becomes their champion, how the Spirit is abundantly poured out." When all is dark, God shines the most!

After all, didn't Jesus say: "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,*" just as Moses and Aaron were persecuted by the Israelite assembly here? And why are those like Moses and Aaron blessed? "*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:10)! Jesus goes on: "*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account,*" just as the Israelite assembly uttered all kinds of evil against Moses and Aaron falsely (Matthew 5:11). In that case, we may actually "*rejoice and be glad!*" Why? "*For your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets,*" like Moses and Aaron, "*who were before you*" (Matthew 5:12). Paul similarly learned to "*boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities – for when I am weak, then am I strong*" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

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Featured Hymn: “O Worship the King, All Glorious Above”

Original Text by Robert Grant

Commentary by Pastor Jonathan

1. O worship the King, all glorious above!
O gratefully sing his power and his love!
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilion'd in splendor, and girded with praise.
2. O tell of his might, O sing of his grace!
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form,
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.
3. The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty! thy power hath founded of old;
Hath stablish'd it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast like a mantle the sea.
4. Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
In streams from the hills it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.
5. Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!
6. O measureless Might! ineffable Love!
While angels delight to hymn thee above,
The humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
With true adoration shall lisp to thy praise.

Original text from Henry Venn Elliott,
Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship
(London: Hatchard and Son, 1845 [1835]), 41.

Appears as hymn #17 in our hymnal (verses 1-2, 4-5).

In April 1746, a Scotsman named Alexander Grant died in battle against the British crown – he was trying to restore the House of Stuart in place of the House of Hanover. On the very day of Alexander's death in battle, his wife gave birth to his son, Charles Grant (1746-1823). Surprisingly, Charles grew up as a loyal citizen of the British Empire. At the age of 21, Charles went to British-colonized India in the service of the British East India Company. He rose through the ranks and began to raise a family in India. His son Robert Grant (1779-1836) was born there.

In time, Robert Grant's lifestyle changed. Two children of his were killed by smallpox, and the traumatic tragedy was God's hammer against his hardened heart. He became an evangelical Christian, which soon affected his outlook on society. In 1790, he returned home to Britain, and his surviving sons were soon enrolled at Cambridge. While Charles was elected to the British Parliament in 1802, Robert finished his studies and was admitted to the bar in 1807. In 1818, the year Charles' ill health forced him to step down from Parliament, Robert was elected.

Both father and son pursued social reform agendas. For instance, Charles fought for Christian missionaries to be admitted into India, while Robert fought (unsuccessfully, at the time) to stop discrimination against Jews in British law. And both father and son were on the frontlines of the campaign to abolish slavery, working closely alongside figures such as William Wilberforce.

In 1832, Robert Grant was appointed as the new Judge Advocate General, the government official responsible for overseeing court-martials in the British military. Robert would later, from 1835 until his death in 1838, serve as colonial governor for Bombay in western India.

In the meantime, however, prior to his gubernatorial appointment, Robert had already taken up the hobby of poetry. After his death, a full volume of his sacred poetry – *Sacred Poetry by the Late Right Hon. Sir Robert Grant* (1839) – was published by his brother. However, some of the included hymns had already begun appearing in collections, as was the case with “O Worship the King, All Glorious Above,” Robert Grant's hymn inspired by Psalm 104.

The first verse celebrates God as the “King, all glorious above,” i.e., in heaven, and calls on us to worship him. This corresponds to the opening of Psalm 104: “*Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty*” (Psalm 104:1). Here in this Christianized version, it is his “wonderful love” that we especially sing – the love particularly revealed in Jesus Christ. The song hails God as “our Shield and Defender” (cf. “*the LORD is my strength and my shield*” [Psalm 28:7]) and as “the Ancient of Days” (a title taken from Daniel 7:14), and then describes God as “pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise,” pointing back to verse 1's description of God as “*clothed with splendor and majesty*,” as well as perhaps to Job 36:29's reference to “*the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of [God's] pavilion*.” The presence of God is undeniably spectacular.

(Continued on Page 22)

(Continued from Page 21, "Featured Hymn")

This allusion is continued in the hymn's second stanza, which speaks of God as One "whose robe is the light, whose canopy [is] space." As Psalm 104:2 addresses God as "*covering yourself with light as a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent*" – or, in Kethe's rendition, "With light as a robe thou hast thyself clad, / whereby all the earth thy greatness may see: / the heav'ns in such sort thou also hast spread, / that they to a curtain compared may be." The picture is immensely majestic: the light that fills the universe is God's royal robes; and the entire cosmos functions as his royal tent or canopy. God as King is a universe-wide claim, and his sovereignty is everywhere in evidence! He is also a King at war with rebellious powers, as suggested by the stanza's next lines: "His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form, / and dark is his path on the wings of the storm." This mainly summarizes Psalm 104:3-4 ("*he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind; he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire*"). In reaction to this picture of God riding out to war, the hymn calls us to both "tell of his might" and "sing of his grace." This God at war is a God who goes to bat for us, for his faithful ones (when such we are).

The third stanza, the one dropped out of our hymnal, meditates on God's powerful act of creation of "the earth with its store of wonders untold." God, as the Almighty, had "founded" it "of old," long ago. God "established it fast by a changeless decree," ensuring the earth's endurance through the ages. And around this land he had made, God had "cast, like a mantle, the sea" – the sea acting like a cloak adorning the land where human beings can live. This part of the hymn summarizes Psalm 104:5-9: "*He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. You covered it with the deep as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down, to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.*"

The fourth stanza meditates on God's continual care of his creation – particularly evidenced by him still providing the gifts of air and water. "Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?" God's providential love exceeds the ability of humans to fully describe. "It breathes in the air" – every breath we get is a gift from God. "It shines in the light" – the light by which we see is also God's caring gift. "It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain, / and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain" – the whole cycle by which any part of the earth is watered is also a sign of God's care. The most basic functions of earth's nature are proclamations that God still loves what he has made! How can we ever doubt? And in this, Grant is only summarizing Psalm 104:10-28, which speak of God's care for all kinds of creatures. The psalm proclaims that God "*makes springs gush forth in the valleys – they flow between the hills – they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode, you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work*" (Psalm 104:10-13). God also "*causes the grass to grow for livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart*" (Psalm 104:14-15). This same God waters his trees abundantly (104:16), in which birds can have their nests as their proper abode (104:17), while mountains and rocks serve a similar purpose for goats and rock badgers (104:18). The rhythms of sun and moon are also ordained to establish rhythms for animals and humans (104:19-23). And at last, the psalmist sings, "*O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures*" (Psalm 104:24).

The fifth stanza admits that these creatures (including ourselves) are "frail children of dust, and feeble as frail" – or, as the psalmist says, "*When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust*" (Psalm 104:29). And yet, because we are so frail, we have ever more reason to trust in the God who gives and find him unfailing, for "*when you send forth your Spirit/Breath, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground*" (Psalm 104:30). God's tender mercies reveal him as our "Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend."

Lastly, the sixth stanza – again left out of our hymnal – resounds with God's praise. It admits that "angels delight to hymn thee above" – that is, angels love to sing to God, as we see in Revelation 4-5. But we are, as yet, part of the "humbler creation," and our "lays" (songs) are more "feeble" and imperfect than angelic worship. But because we truly adore God, we "shall lisp to thy praise." "*I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. ... Bless the LORD, O my soul! Hallelujah!*" (Psalm 104:33-35). Faced with the incredible splendor and providence of God, how can we not? Even if our praises are imperfect due to our humble position, let our joy in him be a cause of life-long song and blessing!

Statistical Report (July 2023)

<u>Worship Service Attendance</u>			<u>Offerings Received</u>
07/02/23	28		\$1,010.00
07/09/23	28		\$880.00
07/16/23	27		\$1,080.00
07/23/23	30		\$1,055.00
<u>07/30/23</u>	<u>36</u>		<u>\$2,140.00</u>
Average:	30 (29.8)	Total:	\$6,165.00

<u>Birthdays (September 2023)</u>			<u>Anniversaries (September 2023)</u>
9/3 – Anita Boley	9/14 – Autumn Kern (Barb Kern's granddaughter)	9/14 – Miriam Rissler	9/26 – Ken and Cindy Bannon
9/15 – Esther Stauffer	9/18 – Floyd Mast	9/19 – Cindy Ruth	9/27 – Carl and Grace Nolt
	9/29 – Amy Hanna		

(Continued from Page 20, “Risking It All for Love”)

But now back to the experiences of Moses and Aaron. Faced with persecution by (effectively) the entirety of Israel, they looked to the Tent of Meeting. Theirs was the sentiment of the psalmist: *“I lift up my eyes unto the hills: where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth”* (Psalm 121:1-2). And this Maker of heaven and earth has answered them, displaying his beauty in his tent. So God summons Moses and Aaron to come hide in him. *“O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge: save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me!”* (Psalm 7:1) – those could've been the words of Moses and Aaron in that moment. For the LORD God is *“the saving refuge of his anointed”* (Psalm 28:8). Now they're meeting with God at the Tent of Meeting (Numbers 16:43).

It's important to remember that God had already instituted the basic structure of the priesthood and the ministry for the nation of Israel before this ever happened. God had appointed the Levites – including Korah and his clan – *“as a gift to Aaron and his sons.”* Why? So that, through their service in support of Aaron's priestly work, *“there may be no plague among the people of Israel when the people of Israel come near the sanctuary”* (Numbers 8:19). In other words, without the faithful work of the Levites to support the priesthood and ensure that holy things were handled in safe ways by safe people, there was a risk that the holy presence among them would become disaster – like a nuclear reactor suffering a containment breach! So when Korah led other Levites in rebellion, it was a recipe for meltdown.

Earlier, as we said before, Moses defused the bomb by pinning all responsibility to the ringleaders. But Israel just disproved Moses' defense speech. So now *“the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment!’”* (Numbers 16:44-45). In other words: “Clear out of the way, Moses, because the reactor's going to blow!” God – outsourcing his voice of mercy to Moses – is free to speak for strict justice here. And if pure justice has its way with Israel, they're going to be totally liquidated, as this generation has proven to deserve. There are no excuses to be made for them. There is no case for Israel getting their umpteenth chance this time. Moses has already said everything that could be said, made every argument he can make. All he and Aaron can do, at first, is this: *“They fell on their faces”* (Numbers 16:45). They lament, they cry, they worship, as *“wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun”* (Numbers 16:46).

But then Moses has an idea. *“Moses said to Aaron: ‘Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make atonement for them!’”* (Numbers 16:46). What he's saying is that Aaron should get out there and run to help the congregation, the assembly, in a way that only he can do – even though this is the exact same congregation, the exact same assembly, that just moments ago was calling Aaron a killer and a blasphemer! This congregation was reviling Aaron, was insulting Aaron, was speaking all kinds of evil against Aaron, was persecuting Aaron, was preparing to murder Aaron... and Moses wants Aaron to go save them?

(Continued on Page 24)

(Continued from Page 23, "Risking It All for Love")

Well... yes. Yes, that's exactly what Moses is saying. And it's exactly what Aaron is going to do. Origen, as he read this passage two centuries after Jesus was raised from the dead, marveled that Moses and Aaron here "are holy, they are perfect, and what's more, they're disciples more of the Gospel than of the Law, and so they love their enemies as well, and they pray for their persecutors." And in doing so, Moses and Aaron obey "precisely what Christ teaches us to do in the Gospels." Because isn't that what Jesus said? "*I say to you,*" he tells us, "*Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you!*" (Matthew 5:44). In this way, "*you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:45). Moses and Aaron are here showing us what it looks like to be children of God, bearing real family resemblance to the Glory that fills the tabernacle. They show it by caring for the people who hate them to death.

I'll be honest, if I were in Aaron's shoes, I might not find it easy to follow Moses' advice here! It's one thing to 'love your enemy' in an abstract sense, or to let go of a hurt from long ago. But to run to the rescue of the mob holding high their torches and pitchforks and screaming for my head on a stake? Well, that's the challenge of the gospel, a challenge that asks far more of us than the Law of Moses ever did. And yet Moses and Aaron are disciples of Jesus even in the days of the old covenant. Without having the incredible gifts that were unlocked only after the death and resurrection of the Son of God, they were empowered by grace to love as Jesus loved. Don't they put us to shame?

So what exactly does this love look like? First, Aaron takes up his censer, a pan designed to take up and handle hot coals and ashes. This is one of the bronze fire-pans God asked Israel to make for working with the sacrificial altar (Exodus 27:3; 38:3). And, as Moses suggested, Aaron scooped up some fiery coal and ash into it from the altar – fire that was already holy because of its origin. But now he took it and "*ran into the midst of the assembly*" (Numbers 16:47). Now, that is not normal! Offerings of incense were burned on "*the altar of incense*" (Exodus 37:25), which was inside the Tent of Meeting, in front of the veil that separated the Ark of the Covenant from the main body of the sanctuary (Exodus 40:26-27). But Moses wants Aaron to go off-script here, bringing an incense offering not to the altar that God had ordained, but into the endangered assembly.

What's more, the Book of Numbers stresses again and again that, "*behold, the plague had already begun among the people*" (Numbers 16:47). What that means is not just that some Israelites were feeling sick. No, this was not a case of a slow disease. The word 'plague' here actually refers to something 'striking' or 'smiting.' So a power of wrath had been let off its leash and was working its way through the assembly, smiting people down left and right, and bringing death. We could easily overlook what that means, because it's obvious, but it's worth spelling out: that means that, in the areas where this wrathful power has already been, there are dead bodies lying on the ground.

Why does that matter? Because while priests in general were restricted about when they could be in contact with a dead body, the high priest in particular was under a total ban of contact with the dead. Not even if his own parents died was the high priest – which is what Aaron was – allowed to break this rule. "*The priest who is chief among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil is poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments..., shall not go in to any dead bodies nor make himself unclean, even for his father or for his mother. He shall not go out of the sanctuary, lest he profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him: I am the LORD*" (Leviticus 21:10-12). So what Moses tells Aaron to do is pretty radical. By approaching the assembly where all these people are being struck dead, Aaron is playing roulette with the Law himself.

And so, there in the midst of this persecuting assembly now being struck by wrath, Aaron places himself. And with this wrath breaking out nearby, "*he put on the incense and made atonement for the people*" (Numbers 16:47). Aaron presented it as an offering to God. He allowed this sweet smell to rise triumphant over the death all around him. He let its fragrant smoke billow forth as a screen of delight, aiming to appease the LORD and have him chain the wrath back up on its leash. He allowed the incense to create a cloud that, he hoped, would cover what was left of Israel, to give them a protective shield, just as when Aaron himself used incense as a shield whenever he went into the Holy of Holies. Aaron took the incense out to the assembly as if to quickly dress everyone in radiation suits for protection. And what did Aaron do then? "*He stood between the dead and the living*" (Numbers 16:48). Aaron planted himself right at the boundary, right where life met death, right where the smiting was happening.

(Continued on Page 25)

(Continued from Page 24, "Risking It All for Love")

When I read that, I can't help but remember the famous picture from June 1989, when an unknown protester stood in the road outside Tiananmen Square in Beijing, blocking the path of a column of tanks, forcing their drivers to choose between stopping or crushing him. That's Aaron, standing nose-to-nose with the Angel of Death. Just moments earlier, a voice urging their self-preservation had said, "*Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment*" (Numbers 16:45). In other words: "Danger, danger! Stay away!" But the voice of mercy from Moses' lips had called Aaron to the thick of things – to the very dividing line between death and life, to the path of the oncoming plague, to exactly the point where holy chutzpah borders on tempting the LORD his God.

And so Aaron carries the incense offering *out of* the safety of the sanctuary and *into* the public square, into the killing fields, into the 'secular' mess of sin. Origen describes the picture like this: "Observe how the high priest wearing the priestly garments goes forth carrying the censer and fire with incense, and heads for the place to which the death borne by the destroying angel had reached. ... Behold the priest standing there and separating the living from the dead by a sort of intervention of his own self." Aaron puts his pulpit on the train tracks, plugs his ears to the whistle and the rumble, and preaches by his actions what a fearless faith looks like, as if daring God to either re-lease the Angel of Death or else let this be the moment the priesthood of Israel ends.

What happens then, as Aaron risks it all for love? A sixth-century Christian named Jacob retold the story like this: "Whenever the angel threatened that he would destroy the camp, Aaron bore the censer filled with fire and went out and held him back from the people. The angel saw the fire and fled away from its brightness. ... The fire drove the Watcher away, and the spear he was holding turned away. With the divine command, the priest restrained the plague; and by means of his incense, he would restrain the angel from wreaking havoc." Origen said that "the power of his propitiation and the mystery of incense shamed the destroying angel, and here death came to an end." The Book of Numbers, not wasting words, reports simply that "*the plague was stopped*" (Numbers 16:48). Aaron's love won!

As Origen read this story, he believed that the reason *why* the plague got plugged, *why* the smiting stopped, was that the destroying angel was terrified by how much Aaron in that moment reminded him of the future Savior who was to come: Jesus Christ. Because Jesus, we know, is our "*merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God,*" who came to the midst of our world "*to make propitiation for the sins of the people*" (Hebrews 2:17). All of us were like that riotous assembly, proudly shouting our sins in defiance – and yet, when justice was on its way, Jesus stepped in the path. He stepped to where life was being overcome by death, and there he offered up the incense of his perfect and unstained soul, his entire divine-and-human self. It was God himself who "*sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10). And Christ shamed Death, Christ tamed Death, and Christ saved the world.

And what of us? With examples like Christ and Aaron, will we stay sheltered as the world is dying? Or will we run to those who need saving (even if they don't see their need), stand in the way, raise our worship, and risk all for love?

You know... Some of our folks certainly do find creative ways to get to and from church!



Preaching Calendar (September – October 2023)

Worship services commence at 10:00 AM on Sundays. We hope to see you there with us!

- September 3 (Pentecost 14):** Pastor Jonathan will be absent due to contracting COVID-19.
Rev. Donald Metz will fill in as our guest preacher.
The hymns will be selected by the congregation during the service.
- September 10 (Pentecost 15):** Sermon Title: “Dust of Earth, Wind of Heaven”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:4-7
“O Worship the King, All Glorious Above” (17)
“Lord, What Was Man When Made at First” (insert)
- September 17 (Pentecost 16):** Sermon Title: “The Garden of Delight”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-14; 3:8a
“For the Beauty of the Earth” (49)
“I Come to the Garden Alone” (349)
- September 24 (Pentecost 17):** Sermon Title: “Gardening a Good Earth”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-15
“I Sing the Almighty Power of God” (48)
“God, Who Touches Earth with Beauty” (401)
- October 1 (Pentecost 18):** Sermon Title: “Idols with a Pulse”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26; 2:4-8
“Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness” (insert)
“Children of the Heavenly Father” (37)
- October 8 (Pentecost 19):** Sermon Title: “Sanctifying Service”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-15
“A Charge to Keep I Have” (489)
“The Race of God's Anointed Priests” (insert)
- October 15 (Pentecost 20):
(Harvest Home)** Sermon Title: “Feel That Holy Rhythm”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:14-18; 2:2-3
“Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” (543)
“O Day of Rest and Gladness” (526)
- October 22 (Pentecost 21):
(Communion Service)** Sermon Title: “Holy Offering”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-9 + Leviticus 2:1-3; 7:11-15
“Take My Life and Let It Be” (386)
“What Happiness Can Equal Mine?” (insert)
- October 29 (Pentecost 22):** Sermon Title: “Crown of Creation”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26-30
“Lord, Our Lord, Thy Glorious Name” (insert)
“Crown Him with Many Crowns” (69)
- November 5 (Pentecost 23):** Sermon Title: “Dominion to Discover and Define”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:10-14, 18-20
“We Search the Starlit Milky Way” (45)
“Let the Words of My Mouth” (568)

Quotes for Thought

“Drive hatred out of your hearts. Love one another in deed and word and inward thoughts.”

– unknown second-century-BC Jewish writer
Testament of Gad 6:1 (c. 150 BC), in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1:816

“Since worship of God is an act of heavenly service, it needs the maximum of devotion and loyalty. How will God love a worshipper if the worshipper doesn't love him, and how will he grant the request of a suppliant who comes to make his prayer without heartfelt commitment? When [pagans] come to make sacrifice, they offer their gods nothing intimate or special, no cleanness of mind, no reverence, no awe. When the sacrifice is over in all its emptiness, they leave their religion as they found it: in the temple and with the temple; they bring none of it with them, and they take none of it away. ... Our, religion, however, is solid, strong, and changeless...”

– Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius
Divine Institutes 5.19.26-30 (c. AD 308), in *Translated Texts for Historians* 40:322

“Let's not be curious about the failings of others but reckon up our own; let's reckon the good deeds of others, while we consider our sins. And in this way, we shall please God.”

– St. John Chrysostom
Homilies on Philipians 10 (c. AD 390s), in *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* 36:211

“Since the fall of man, this law has been given to the world, and this is the sentence of God: that bitter death shall cut down all men whom birth has brought to light. ... Let us recall that Christ, the hope of all believers, calls those who have departed from the world 'sleeping,' not 'dead.' ... Therefore, let the hope of resurrection inspire us that we shall again see there those whom we lose here. We have only to believe well in him and obey his commandments, with whom is all power, that he can more easily rouse the dead than we those who sleep. ... O death, that separates those who were joined...! Now, now is your strength destroyed!”

– St. Braulio of Saragossa
Letter 19 (c. AD 636), in *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 63:47-48

“People cry for the death of the body, for the death of their friends; but when they see them die the death of the soul – that is, by the sins they commit by which they are separated from God who is the life of the soul – it is no great matter at all to them. ... Good people, let us cry for the death of souls more than for the death of the body. ... The soul is the life of the body, and God is the life of the soul.”

– Maurice de Sully, bishop of Paris
Sermon 38.2, for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (c. AD 1160s-1190s), in *Victorine Texts in Translation* 8:379-380

“Our whole life here is nothing but a journey towards death, and a very short journey at that ... Like a torrent, the ever-moving passage of time is carrying us off, even if we and others think that we are resting. ... Our Lord died for us and brought it about that death, previously the passage to hell, is now the gateway to heaven, and what was previously the beginning of eternal torments is now the entrance to heavenly joys. The result is that death, so far from inflicting losses, now brings the highest profits to those who believe in Christ.”

– Erasmus of Rotterdam
Preparing for Death (AD 1534), in *Collected Works of Erasmus* 3:395-396, 407

“The fact of revelation is this: Omnipotence is our ally. ... If the church then is at any time weak and fearful, and cries out as did Judah before Ammon and Moab, 'We have no weight against this great company,' it needs to hear what the spirit of the Lord said through Jahziel: 'The battle is not yours but God's.' ... The secret of the church is not in glittering ceremonials, or vast machineries, or prosperous organizations drawing the fashionable crowds... The secret of Christian power is the alliance of our souls by faith with the loving heart of him who called Abraham from a life among idolaters to a life of trust in Jehovah, of him who empowered Moses to carry the burden of the people's woes because he lived as seeing the invisible God, of him who gave victory to Joshua and to all who in human weakness have leaned confidently on divine strength.”

– John Henry Barrows
“The Great Hindrances,” 18 September 1883, in *Sermons and Addresses, Question Drawer, and Other Proceedings of the Christian Convention Held in Chicago, September 18th to 20th, 1883* (Fairbanks, Palmer, & Co., 1884), 899-900

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We praise God* for all the wondrous blessings he's given us, most notably the ministry of his Son (in death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand) and the gift of his Holy Spirit; and *we pray* that God would glorify his name above all else and would bring his kingdom more fully to earth.
- *We pray for our denomination, our congregation, and the church universal*, that God would bless us at all levels with faithfulness, wisdom, vision, and fortitude to earnestly labor in his vineyard.
 - *We pray particularly for* our pastor **Rev. Jonathan J. Brown** and for **our church board**.
 - *We pray also for* **our Evangelical Congregational Church leadership**: our bishop **Randy Sizemore**, executive director **Kevin Henry**, and district field director **Keith Miller**; the **Global Ministries Community** under **Ted Rathman**; the **Kingdom Extension Community** under **Mike Snedeker**; the **Church Health Community** under **Gary Kuehner**; the **Missional Alignment Community** under **Bishop Randy Sizemore**; and the **Ministerial Development Community** under **Matthew Hill**.
- *We pray for our missionary partners* (such as **Dan Quigley** and others), that God would keep them safe and faithful, would focus their efforts on God's work, and would grant success in accordance with his holy will.
- *We pray for other churches and pastors in our community*, that God would keep all congregations united in one holy faith and devoted to the ardent service of one and the same kingdom and of its King, Jesus.
- *We pray for the salvation of our whole community and its maturation in Christian discipleship*, knowing that there is hope in Jesus for all people and for entire communities to reflect the righteous love of God.
- *We pray for an end to disease outbreaks* such as coronavirus, mpox, cholera, dengue, diphtheria, and RSV.
- *We pray for an easing to the economic suffering around the world*, especially due to the inflation surge.
- *We pray for those suffering in the wake of disasters around the world*, that God would have mercy:
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by natural disasters such as famine; drought; the Asian, European, and North American heatwaves; wildfires in Portugal, Spain, Greece, Canada, Hawaii, and Washington; typhoons in China, Japan, and Korea; Storm Hans in Norway, Lithuania, and Latvia; Hurricane Idalia in Florida and Georgia; lightning strikes in Yemen; flooding in Slovenia, Sweden, Myanmar, and India; landslides in Georgia, Austria, China, Myanmar, India, and Tajikistan; rockfalls in Israel; earthquakes in Colombia.
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by accidents such as plane crashes in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Lebanon; helicopter crashes in Australia and California; boat accidents in Uganda, Myanmar, Tunisia, Italy, France, Cape Verde, Turkey, and Nigeria; train accidents in Pakistan, Sweden, and Italy; bus/truck crashes in Mexico, Thailand, Morocco, Armenia, and Nepal; building collapses in Nigeria and Egypt; the bridge collapse in India; the crane collapse in India; the stampede in Madagascar; fires in France, South Africa, and the Philippines; explosions in Turkey, Russia, Dominican Republic, China, Kyrgyzstan, India, Romania, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; etc.
- *We pray also for those victimized by violence and social ills*, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that the God of all comfort would make his presence manifest to the injured, traumatized, and grieving.
 - *We pray additionally for* those afflicted by the Uyghur genocide in China; war in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, etc.; the Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts; insurgency in Egypt, Colombia, Chad, Cameroon, Congo, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Niger, India, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey, Myanmar, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, and Libya; gang/cartel wars in Mexico, Ecuador, and Haiti; kidnappings in Mexico, Uganda, Nigeria, etc.; clashes in Sweden, Greece, Ethiopia, and Cyprus; riots in India, Belgium, and New York; rocket attacks in Ukraine, Sudan, etc.; mass shootings in Israel, Bosnia, Mali, a mosque in Iran, California, and Florida; bombings in Afghanistan; the grenade attack in Ethiopia; arson in Senegal; the vehicle-ramming in Cambodia; attacks on villages in the West Bank and on churches in India and Pakistan; the American opioid epidemic; human rights violations (e.g., abortion and human trafficking); and the refugee crisis.
- *We pray for* all who serve and protect us, including **civic leaders, police, firefighters, medical responders**, and **members of the military**: May God keep them safe, just, wise, sincere, humble, and accountable as they administer justice, guard against chaos, prevent harm, and defend the vulnerable.
- *We pray for our nation and its government* at all levels and in all branches, that God would move our leaders to repent of unjust or unmerciful practices and laws; that God would crown them with wisdom, security, peace, and civility toward all; and that God would give them godly hearts to live and govern rightly.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for the persecutors and maligners of the church around the world:*
 - *We pray for* the conversion of terrorists and other people of violence into disciples of the Prince of Peace.
 - *We pray for* the wisdom of God to be made manifest to skeptics and critics.
 - *We pray for* the Spirit's boldness to fill the hearts of all believers to witness to Jesus in life and in death.
- *We pray for the families and friends of many who have entered their rest in the past year, including:*
 - For the family of **Marian Rissler** (Dave's sister-in-law), who entered rest on September 1, 2022.
 - For the family of **Linda Kohl** (Clair's wife, Del's sister-in-law), who entered rest on September 3, 2022.
 - For the family of **Erma Martin** (Shirley Good's friend), who entered rest on September 24, 2022.
 - For the family of **Sharon Brubaker** (Skip's cousin/Grace's niece), who entered rest September 24, 2022.
 - For the family of **Norbert Sedelbauer** (Ruth Snader's uncle), who entered rest on October 5, 2022.
 - For the family of **Jean Adams** (Sharon Horst's mother), who entered rest on October 14, 2022.
 - For the family of **Roy Sweigart** (Kim's father-in-law), who entered rest on November 16, 2022.
 - For the family of **Ginger Goudie** (the Hesses' friend Jim's wife), who entered rest November 28, 2022.
 - For the family of **Patricia Dietz** (Bob Dietz's wife), who entered rest on December 3, 2022.
 - For the family of **Bob Dietz**, who entered rest on December 4, 2022.
 - For the family of **Earl Pickel**, who entered rest on December 19, 2022.
 - For the family of **David Hurst**, who entered rest on December 22, 2022.
 - For the family of **Letty Clark**, who entered rest on December 25, 2022.
 - For the family of **Bob Forrey**, who entered rest on January 5, 2023.
 - For the family of **Paul Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on January 6, 2023.
 - For the family of **June Harter** (Sue Eshelman's mother), who entered rest on January 24, 2023.
 - For the family of **Darlene Young**, who entered rest on February 1, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mike Diem**, who entered rest on February 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Alvin Wise** (Jean Hess' uncle), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Grace Sprecher** (Sharon Mast's aunt), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Herman Martin**, who entered rest on February 25, 2023.
 - For the family of **Leon Hartranft**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Amanda Hoffert**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Lois Gift**, who entered rest on March 20, 2023.
 - For the family of **William Riegel** (Del's brother-in-law), who entered rest on March 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Darryl Imler** (Leroy Stoltzfus' nephew), who entered rest on April 1, 2023.
 - For the family of **Glenn Weber**, who entered rest on April 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Jones** (Floyd Mast's uncle), who entered rest on April 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Linda Wonder** (Sharon Mast's stepmother), who entered rest on April 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Herr** (Abby Eberly's friend), who entered rest on April 29, 2023.
 - For the family of **Sherry Stoltzfus** (Esther's sister-in-law's mother), who entered rest on May 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Jim Brubaker**, who entered rest on May 5, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on June 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **Geraldine Fauser** (Pastor Jonathan's friend's mother), who entered rest July 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ben Schweitzer** (Kim Sweigart's son-in-law's friend), who entered rest July 10, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Martin** (Abby Eberly's friend's sister), who entered rest on July 15, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ray Snader**, who entered rest on July 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Kendig** (Sharon Mast's brother-in-law), who entered rest on July 19, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Skiba** (Sally Arment's cousin), who entered rest on August 20, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ivan Zimmerman** (Ray Snader's brother-in-law), who entered rest on August 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Della Bollinger** (Floyd Mast's aunt), who entered rest on August 27, 2023.
 - May the Lord give immeasurable peace, strength, and comfort to all who face loss and grief.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for all dementia sufferers* and for **their caretakers**, that God would lighten burdens, restore clarity to injured minds, and speak directly to hearts and souls with his comfort, his peace, and the light of grace.
- *We pray for all suffering from cancer* – (including Randy Vandill, Cindy Ebersole, Troy Frey, Lisa Mast, Lori Zimmerman, Pat Street [Nancy Mountz's sister], Betty Kennedy [Del Ream's niece-in-law], Adrienne Hedges [Brenna Pammer's friend], Donna and Brandy Rhodes [Cindy Ruth's sister-in-law and nephew], Earl Martin [Miriam Rissler's brother-in-law], Doris Snader, Erwin Sensenig Jr., Titus Burkholder [Jean Hess' relative], Rev. Marlin Lafferty, Rev. Don Wert, etc.) – that God may shield them from pain, restore their bodies, comfort them, and bless their doctors.
- *We pray for the other assorted health concerns (and other needs) of:*
 - Earl and Pauline Good + John Good (Earl's brother) + David Good + Dave Embry Jr.
 - Lorraine Burkholder (Shirley's daughter) + Linda Burkholder + Mary Andrews + Raymond Bannon
 - Floyd Mast + Steven Mast (Floyd's son) + Cindy Bannon + Marilyn Wilson (Cindy's mother)
 - Delores Jaxel + Clair Kohl + Jeff Kohl + Henry Kohl + Shawn and Candace Sweigart
 - Cherri Snader + Lawrence Groff + Jim Becker + Don Pickle + Dot Yohn
 - Debbie Diem (Sharon Mast's sister) + Tom Schwer (Sharon's stepbrother)
 - Barty Messner + Shannon Messner + Shirley Riggins (Deb Messner's mother)
 - Henrietta Hoshauer + Brandon Wilson + Jane Carr (Brenna Pammer's grandmother)
 - Jerry Felpel and Doris Getz + Dawn Acevedo (Cindy Hoffer's sister) + Paul Ford
 - Josh Kendig (Sharon Mast's son) + Connie Dieter (Leon and Jean Hess's daughter)
 - Larsen Houck (Shirley Good's great-grandson) + Kayley Smith (the Hesses' granddaughter)
 - Kathryn Shirk (Jean Hess's aunt) + Sonya Shirey (Jean's friend) + Dennis Wanner
 - Abby Eberly + Linda Sweitzer (Abby's friend) + Lindsay Ringler (Abby's granddaughter)
 - Ray Arment + Butch and Mike Skiba + Emily Sensenig
 - Violet Stauffer + Floyd Heuyard + Sharon Geib (Deb Kimmel's sister)
 - Veanna Baxter + Julia Reed (Veanna's sister) + Shirley Buchanan
 - Ken Styer + Lucy Weber + Bret Hoffert + Jethro Hursh
 - Jeremy Kurman + Warren Weinhold + Jody Freeman
 - Jess Pennepacker + Charles Yingst + Ralph Mountz
 - Carl and Grace Nolt + Vera Kochel + Carl Martin
 - Robert and Barbara Sparr + Rodger Whittaker
 - Elizabeth Zimmerman (John Eberly's sister)
 - Dorothy Long (Sharon Mast's boss's sister)
 - Savannah Walker + Ben + Tim + Minerva Hufford
 - Troy Frey and both of his parents + Tory Lingg
 - Ken Keen and Nancy Fox (Floyd Mast's friends)
 - Donna Sensenig + Larry Sensenig + Daryll Sensenig
 - Delores, Ruth, Jeremiah, Bobby, and Ruth Snader
 - Carol Briggs (Ruth Snader's sister) + Ken Cochran (Ruth's cousin-in-law)
 - Linda Talbot (Cindy Ruth's sister) + Albert Rhodes (Cindy's brother)
 - Rodney Rhodes (Cindy Ruth's cousin) + Cathy Bullock (Cindy's neighbor)
 - Rebecca Lucas (the Walkers' family friend) + Rebecca Horst + Dillon Dewire + Barb Kern
 - Linda Ebert (Barb's friend) + the Bowmans (Barb's cousins) + Danielle (Barb's grandson's girlfriend)
- *We pray for other neighbors, friends, and believers in need*, that God would heal, provide, and comfort.
- *We pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit* upon our church, our community, our county, our nation, the Evangelical Congregational Church, and the church universal. *We pray for the whole church to be filled with a spiritual zeal for worship, evangelism, and discipleship. May the fires of revival fall!*
- *We praise God for all the prayers we've seen him answer and for his everlasting faithfulness!*